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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000314

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [OVIP](#) [MARR](#) [SY](#) [BA](#)
SUBJECT: GENERAL PETRAEUS' MAY 20 MEETING WITH KING HAMAD

REF: 08 MANAMA 845

Classified By: CDA Christopher Henzel for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Participants:

United States:

General David Petraeus, Commander, USCENTCOM
Ambassador Adam Ereli
General John Allen, Deputy Commander, USCENTCOM
Mike Gfoeller, POLAD USCENTCOM
Saadi Othman, Adviser to General Petraeus
Ali Khedery, Adviser to General Petraeus
Colonel Mike Iverson, Executive Officer to General Petraeus
Colonel Mike Bell, USCENTCOM
Colonel Kevin Kyger, Embassy Manama
Steven Butler, Embassy Manama (notetaker)

Bahrain:

King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa
Khalid bin Ahmed bin Salman Al Khalifa, Minister of the Royal Court
General Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Commander in Chief of the Bahrain Defense Forces
Major General Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Minister of State for Defense Affairs
Khalifa bin Abdallah Al Khalifa, Head of Bahrain National Security Agency
General Duaij bin Salman Al Khalifa, Chief of Staff, Bahrain Defense Forces
Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, Foreign Minister
Mohamed Abdul Ghaffar, Foreign Policy Advisor to the King

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: The King and General Petraeus discussed Bahraini support for the U.S. Navy; the situation with respect to Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Syria; and a proposed regional office of the Near East and South Asia (NESA) Center. End summary.

[1](#)3. (C) Support to the U.S. Navy: King Hamad met General Petraeus in uniform and his introductory comments centered on the King's experience at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College - which he clearly enjoyed. King Hamad recalled his grandfather visiting a U.S. aircraft carrier sixty years earlier and quickly launched into his oft-heard refrain about how U.S. political and military support had enabled the Gulf to grow and prosper in peace and stability. As a result, King Hamad welcomed the possible deployment of P-3 maritime reconnaissance aircraft to Bahrain's Shaikh Isa Air Base, with the comment, "Anything you want on land, sea, or air (sic), we can do it."

[1](#)4. (C) Petraeus confirmed that a decision to allow the return of children dependents of U.S. Navy personnel assigned to Bahrain was pending and that we were optimistic it would be a

positive one. (Return of adult dependents was approved in December 2008.) The King responded that it was important for American military families to feel welcome and supported in Bahrain. For that reason, he offered the U.S. Government use of an unspecified parcel of prime beachfront real estate on one of the island's premier property development projects "Al Amwaj" that would allow for direct access to the sea and recreational facilities. The King also offered to cover a portion of the costs of whatever facilities the Navy may wish to build there, with the comment that, "It's the least we can do for these men and women who work for the security of the region." He instructed Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed to work with the Embassy and NAVCENT on identifying a specific plot of land for this purpose.

15. (C) Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan: Petraeus noted that Iraq is moving forward, and the King responded, "They'll get there." Petraeus pointed out that Iran continues to fund, train, and equip several Shia extremist groups inside Iraq. The King said he supported the United States' policy of diplomatic engagement with Iran, but engagement backed by a credible deterrent. He said he had told Secretary Clinton during their meeting last February in Sharm el Sheikh that that the U.S. should talk to Iran, but that we must talk only with Khamenei and his group, since Khamenei and not Ahmedinejad is the real power. The King also said that Bahrain was prepared to send a company of Special Security Force police to Afghanistan. Petraeus welcomed this contribution to the coalition effort and pledged CENTCOM's support in facilitating their deployment.

16. (C) General Petraeus noted that he met with the U.S.

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Charge to Syria while in Amman and asked the King for his advice on how the U.S. might approach the Syrians on the matter of their continuing facilitation of the Al Qaeda foreign fighter and suicide bomber network in Iraq. King Hamad told Petraeus that he had hosted Bashar Al Assad and his family in Bahrain recently. At that time, Hamad said that he had been tough with Bashar over allegations that Bahraini extremists were being trained at Hezbollah-run camps in Syria (reftel). He said that Bashar had on several previous occasions pledged to take action, but had never done so. Expressing his frustration, the King said that he told Bashar: "I can't allow this game to continue," and that if Bashar would not take action he would "one day have to speak against him."

17. (C) NESAs and Ambassadors' Conference: General Petraeus noted that he planned to attend the Manama Dialogue again, and he briefed the King on joint State/CENTCOM plans to host a conference for regional U.S. Ambassadors in Bahrain in late July. The King welcomed this news and said the country's best hotel would be devoted to the conference. As a follow-up to an earlier conversation and with the full support of the Ambassador, Petraeus also discussed with the King the idea of locating in Bahrain a forward element of the Near East and South Asia (NESA) Center currently co-located with the National Defense University in Washington, D.C. (GEN Petraeus comment: This initiative has been working with NESA for some time; the original plan was to locate it in Muscat, but the Omanis were not supportive when they learned that NESA has Israeli alumni who might be invited to events.) He noted, in particular, the value of various NESA alumni events that could be hosted by such a center in Bahrain. King Hamad said Bahrain would welcome such a facility.

18. (U) General Petraeus has cleared this message.

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